

DAILY LIFE IN QUATTROCENTO FLORENCE

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Introduction

Florence was one of the largest and most important cities in Italy during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, with a population of 60,000 people in the fifteenth century. Before the Black Death, it had been one of the five largest cities in Europe, with a population of 100,000. The city was enclosed by a protective wall, which had gates that led to roads out to the countryside and to other towns. These gates were: **Porta S. Niccolo**, **Porta S. Miniato**, **Porta S. Giorgio**, **Porta S. Piero Gattolino**, **Porta S. Friano**, **Porta al Prato**, **Porta S. Faenza**, **Porta S. Gallo**, **Porta Pinti** and the **Porta alla Croce**. Florence is located on the **Arno River** and was then surrounded by rural countryside, farms and small villages. There was also a larger area of Florentine sovereignty, which included smaller towns like Arezzo and Prato.

Florence was divided into quarters, as most Italian cities were at that time. These were **Santo Spirito**, **San Giovanni**, **Santa Maria Novella** and **Santa Croce**, named for major churches in the area. People were fiercely loyal to their own neighborhoods, and sometimes they developed intense rivalries with residents from another quarter. Streets were generally narrow and crooked, with little open space except in piazzas in front of churches or in the market. Some attempt was made to straighten out some of the streets in the fourteenth century, but most such renovation was not done until much later.

Florentines spoke Italian, naturally, but theirs was a Tuscan dialect that actually served as the basis for modern "proper" Italian grammar. They could still be understood by, say, a Venetian, but their dialect was markedly different.

1. Government

Florence was a republic, which meant that there was no titled or ruling nobility in the city. It was governed by its citizens, who were elected to office by drawing names out of a purse or pouch. Men had to be at least thirty years of age and a member of one of the city's guilds to be eligible for office. (Women were not eligible at all.) Anyone who was seriously considering a political career would have to serve in at least one governing body, and many served more than once.

There were a number of ruling bodies, which had different duties and responsibilities. The **Signoria**, or Priors, were the highest governing council. It consisted of eight members who served a term of two months. There was also a **Gonfalonier of Justice**, who served as a kind of "chairman". This was the highest elected position in the city, though he was considered *primus inter pares*, "first among equals." The Signoria represented the republic in affairs with other states or nations, ran the administrative aspects of the government and created statutes in its legislative capacity. The *signori*

were assisted by two other bodies of officials, the *Buonomini*, of which there were twelve, and the *Gonfalonieri delle Compagnie*, of which there were sixteen and who represented the different districts of the city. For important issues such as constitutional changes in government, the *parlamento* was convened, consisting of all male citizens over the age of fourteen who could be summoned to the Piazza della Signoria by the ringing of bells.

Two other governing councils were the **Council of the People** and the **Council of the Commune**, functioning in a manner somewhat similar to the U.S. Congress. The Council of the People was made up of 285 citizens drawn from each district and including heads of guilds. The Council of the Commune had 208 members, made up of leading merchants, bankers and business magnates of the city. Bills that were to become laws had to pass through both councils with a 2/3 majority. In 1412, a new council was created to discuss the more important issues (especially fiscal measures) before passing through the Councils of the People and of the Commune. This group was called the **Council of Two Hundred**, and it was made up of citizens who had served as *signori*, *buonomini* and *gonfalonieri delle compagnie*. It was renewable every six months.

Another governing body, the *balia*, was essentially a war council. Ten men served on it in times of need and they were responsible for organizing military matters. Towards the end of the fifteenth century they were given a great deal of power.

The judiciary branch of the government was fulfilled by several other officials. One was the *podestà*, who was required to be a nobleman by birth and to have no connections with the city. This person would serve a term of six months and generally rule on civil matters. A number of learned doctors of law would work with and advise the *podestà*. The *capitano* served in much the same way, except that he dealt with criminal matters.

2. Commerce and Economy

Florence was a fairly prosperous city during the Renaissance, though things like war and plague did depress its economy at times. Its major industries were cloth manufacturing and trade, and banking. Merchants imported raw wool from England and Flanders, then processed, wove and dyed it, and finally exported it to other countries. Florentine weavers were among the best in Italy, producing extravagant brocades and velvets. Banking was another major business activity in Florence, and the city became a center for international trade. A number of prominent, wealthy families in Florence made their fortunes in banking; the **Medici** are obviously the most famous, but others included the **Bardi**, **Strozzi**, **Albizzi**, **Rucellai**, etc. Branches of

various banks were established in other Italian cities and other European countries as well.

Guilds played a major role in the city's economic life. They served to regulate the activities of their members, to create a monopoly on each particular trade and to enforce a standard on the methods and processes used to create products. The seven major guilds (*Arti Maggiori*) were: Cloth Merchants (also known as the *Calimala*), Judges and Lawyers, Bankers and Moneychangers, Wool Manufacturers, Doctors and Apothecaries, Silk Manufacturers and Merchants, and Furriers and Tanners. The fourteen minor guilds (*Arti Minori*) were: Butchers, Shoemakers, Smiths, Stonemasons and Woodworkers, Leather-workers, Vintners, Bakers, Oilmongers, Locksmiths, Flax Merchants, Cabinet-makers, Cuirass-makers, Harness-makers, and Innkeepers. Virtually all trades practiced in the city fell under the purview of one of these guilds. Each guild had a location for its headquarters, its own set of statutes governing its members, and even its own patron saint. As we have seen, citizens had to be members of a guild before seeking public office, so the guilds also played a fairly major political role as well.

The system of currency in Florence during the Renaissance was as follows: *Denari* were the smallest denomination of coin, and were made of silver. Twelve denari equaled one *soldo*, and twenty soldi equaled a *lira*, which had previously only existed as a convenient unit for accounting purposes. Due to the rising value of silver over the years, in 1371 the gold *fiorino* was created, equivalent to 29 soldi. The florin showed St. John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint on the obverse and the stylized fleur-de-lys on the reverse, which is the city's emblem. It is virtually impossible to say how much these units of money would be worth in today's currency, given ever increasing inflation and fluctuating values of base metals.

3. Religion

Religion was, of course, a major part of daily life during the Renaissance. People attended Mass at least once a week, on Sunday, but usually more often. There were a number of major churches and convents in and near the city where people went to worship. The cathedral of **Santa Maria del Fiore**, also known as the *Duomo*, was still being constructed in the fifteenth century, not to be finally completed until the 1450s. This is still one of the most recognizable landmarks in Florence. **Santa Maria Novella** was a Dominican church, and houses the Tornabuoni chapel, where Domenico Ghirlandaio painted some of his most famous frescoes. **San Lorenzo** was the parish church of the Medici family, and most of its members are buried there. **Santa Croce** was a Franciscan church and is also home to major artwork of the time. **Santo Spirito**, **San Miniato**, **Santa Maria del Carmine** and **Santa Trinita** are other churches located in the city. The **Baptistery of San Giovanni** is located in the piazza in front of the *Duomo*, and all Florentine children were baptized there. It was built in the seventh

century, though contemporary Florentines erroneously believed that it was a Roman temple of Mars.

Another form of religious activity was membership in a confraternity. These groups of citizens usually performed works of charity in the name of Christianity, often helping to provide for the poor and the sick. One such confraternity, the ***Compagnia dei Neri***, was dedicated to offering spiritual comfort to criminals who had been condemned to death. Members walked with the criminal through the streets on the way to the place of execution, praying for his soul and calling for sinners to repent. Others provided dowries for poor young women so that they could make an honorable marriage, while still others ran orphanages, or founding hospitals.

There were numerous saints' days and feasts throughout the year, many of which involved great celebration throughout Florence. There would be magnificent processions through the streets, religious plays, as well as dancing and feasting. The **Feast of Saint John the Baptist** occurs on June 24, and this was the biggest festival of the year. **Carnival** was also a popular time for celebrating; it occurred just before the beginning of Lent and was the precursor to modern Mardi Gras.

Since Rome was not only the center of western Christianity, but also a major secular power, the pope was an important figure in political affairs as well. The **popes of the fifteenth century were:** Innocent VII (1404-1406); Gregory XII (1406-1415); Martin V (1417-1431); Eugene IV (1431-1447); Nicholas V (1447-1455); Calixtus III (1455-1458); Pius II (1458-1464); Paul II (1464-1471); Sixtus IV (1471-1484); Innocent VIII (1484-1492); and Alexander VI (1492-1503). During the first years of the fifteenth century, there were actually two popes, one in Rome and one in Avignon, France; but the story behind that is long and too complicated to delve into here.

4. Warfare

Like most of Italy, Florence's armies were largely composed of mercenaries, or ***condottieri***. The city's most prominent citizens were mostly bankers and businessmen, who had no training or inclination to be professional soldiers. Mercenaries were often hired from other parts of Italy, as well as other European countries. Since they were professional soldiers, their skill and experience were extremely valuable. Often their loyalty was questionable, but as long as they were paid and treated fairly, they maintained a good reputation.

Milan was a traditional enemy of Florence. **Giangaleazzo Visconti**, Duke of Milan at the end of the fourteenth century, maintained an expansionist policy toward the rest of the peninsula. Since Milan is in the north of the country, naturally Florence is on the way south. Giangaleazzo brought his armies down with an eye towards conquering

as much territory as possible, and laid siege to Florence for several years. Things were not going well for the Florentines, but the siege ended suddenly in 1402 when Giangaleazzo died of a fever. However, his son, **Filippo Maria Visconti**, continued to harass Florence periodically as well.

Other adversaries included the towns of Pisa, Lucca and Siena. Pisa and Lucca were a part of Florentine territory but at different points during the fifteenth century waged war to establish their independence. Siena and Florence had long had a rivalry which escalated into war. In the 1490s the city faced another threat as Charles VIII swept through Italy on his way to conquer the papal states and Naples.

Typical armor included an armet or barbute type of helmet, overlapping pauldrons, a breastplate or brigandine, cuisses and greaves. Milan's armorers produced some of the best armor in the world, and many wealthy Florentines bought Milanese work, even those who fought only in tournaments, rather than on the battlefield.

5. Humanism

Humanism was an intellectual movement that swept through Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and found a particularly receptive home in Florence. It was essentially the rediscovery and study of classical thought and ideals. Humanist scholars also spent a great deal of time, money and energy collecting works from ancient Greece and Rome and avidly sought manuscripts from the classical era. Schools and academies were founded to teach students to read and translate Greek. Humanism also emphasized secular studies, causing religious leaders to denounce the entire movement. Preachers such as **Girolamo Savonarola** railed against this shift away from purely religious thought. In truth, Renaissance humanism paved the way for a modern sense of "personal independence and individual expression."

Francesco Petrarch is considered the father of humanism. He lived during the fourteenth century, writing many works in the manner of the classical Latin authors. A great number of scholars and writers followed in his footsteps in the fifteenth century, including **Coluccio Salutati**, **Giovanni Pico della Mirandola**, **Leonardo Bruni**, **Leon Battista Alberti**, **Marsilio Ficino** and **Cristoforo Landino**. Many of these thinkers were encouraged and patronized by powerful and wealthy families such as the Medici, serving as private tutors to their children.

6. Education

The literacy level in Florence during the fifteenth century was fairly high in comparison to other areas of Europe at the time. However, literacy was really only prevalent among the middle and upper classes. Some men of the artisan class were educated to a certain extent, while those of the patrician class studied extensively with the great thinkers and scholars discussed in the previous section. Grammar schools taught boys to write and to read Latin or Italian, depending on what their lot in life was. Those who were destined for wealth and power learned the formal Latin of the intellectual tradition, while those of a somewhat lower class learned either a more practical form of the language or their native Italian which would prepare them for a career in commerce or trading. They also learned math and accounting skills. Lower class laborers generally received very little education at all and could not read or write more than a few words.

Some young men, after attaining a basic education, went on to study at university. The **University of Florence** was founded in 1321, and there were other centers of learning springing up all over Italy during the fourteenth century. The **Universities of Pisa, Padua, Bologna and even Paris** attracted Florentine students as well. A higher education prepared students for careers as scholars, doctors, lawyers, or to pursue a religious calling.

Others received a more practical education. Boys as young as seven or eight could be apprenticed in an artisan's workshop to learn a trade under a master. They would continue to learn in that environment for a number of years until they had received enough training to start their own workshop.

Women were generally not very highly educated, though some did learn to read and write, particularly those of the upper class. Women who worked alongside their husbands in their businesses were often somewhat literate, enough to keep track of the accounts and help run affairs. A woman who was educated to a university level was extremely rare, though it did happen occasionally. Most people considered such a woman unnatural and viewed her with suspicion, however. If she received any acclaim for her achievements, it was usually due to her gender and not because of the merits of her intellect. Most often, women of a scholarly bent chose to give up their books in order to marry and raise a family.

7. Art

Most people who think of the Italian Renaissance think first of the amazing proliferation of fine art during that period. Indeed, there were some incredible developments in the arts at that time - not the least of which is the re-discovery of **linear perspective**; one of its first uses can be seen in **Masaccio's *Trinity***, now in the church of Santa Maria Novella. Painting lost the stylized stiffness of typical medieval art, and became more realistic.

Religious subjects continued to dominate the world of art in the fifteenth century. Cycles of frescoes depicting the lives of Christ and the saints adorn churches and private chapels. Up and coming painters were commissioned by the wealthy to paint subjects of their choosing, usually religious themes, and often the patron was depicted alongside the saints and other religious figures. **Domenico Ghirlandaio's** frescoes in the Tornabuoni chapel in Santa Maria Novella show a great number of contemporary figures as witnesses to the events taking place. Towards the end of the century, classical and secular subjects became popular as well, due to the prevalence of humanistic thinking.

Portraits gained popularity during the fifteenth century as well. The early fashion was for a profile portrait; there are a number of wedding portraits of women in this style. Later the three-quarter portrait began to make its appearance. **Antonio del Pollaiuolo** painted a number of portraits of women, and **Sandro Botticelli** produced several of men.

Fresco was the major technique for doing large works of art. There are different types of fresco; the first is **buon fresco**, which involves applying pigment to wet plaster, whereas **fresco a secco** involves applying pigment to dry plaster. *Buon fresco* is generally more durable, but the artist has to work quickly in order to apply the pigment before the plaster dries out. **Leonardo da Vinci** disliked the technique because he worked too slowly. This led him to experiment with a different technique when he painted *The Last Supper*, but unfortunately the work began degrading almost as soon as it was done. Panel painting was another popular technique for smaller works, such as altarpieces or triptychs. A wooden panel would be primed with gesso and then painted with tempera paints. Oil paints also came into use during the fifteenth century, giving a new life and dimension to painting.

Sculpture also underwent a resurgence in the Quattrocento. The emphasis became the imitation of nature and the rendering of three-dimensional space. Many sculptors attempted to imitate the look of classical Roman and Greek statues. Some of the more famous sculptural works include the bronze statue of David (who was identified

with the city of Florence) done by **Donatello (Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi)**, **Lorenzo Ghiberti's** bronze doors on the east side of the baptistery, and **Michelangelo Buonarroti's** statues of David and the Pietà.

Florence was, obviously, one of the major centers of art during the Renaissance. Some of the most famous artists in history trained and worked there, such as Michelangelo, Botticelli and da Vinci. Other artists, less well known but just as talented, included **Ghirlandaio, Filippo Lippi, Pollaiuolo, Benozzo Gozzoli, Andrea del Castagno and Pietro Perugino.**

8. Architecture

Like fine art, architecture also underwent some major developments. The most recognizable building in Florence is the Duomo, with its gravity-defying *cupola*, or dome. The dome was designed by **Filippo Brunelleschi** in 1418, and took over thirty years to complete. Brunelleschi's design and techniques were revolutionary, and his ideas were met with scepticism at first. But they worked, and the dome is still the largest one in the world, at 143 feet in diameter.

Other buildings of note in Florence are the **Palazzo Vecchio**, which was the center of government in the fifteenth century (and still houses the city council); the **Loggia dei Lanzi**, built in the fourteenth century as a location for the assemblies of the people and public ceremonies; the **Palazzo Pitti**, which was also designed by Brunelleschi for a wealthy merchant in the 1440s, and which is now a museum; and the **Palazzo Medici** (now the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi), which was designed by another architect by the name of **Michelozzo Michelozzi** for Cosimo de' Medici, also in the 1440s; and the **Ospedale degli Innocenti** ("Hospital of the Innocents"), a foundling home or orphanage. Another important landmark is the **Ponte Vecchio** ("old bridge"). It is one of the bridges across the Arno that connects the areas of the city on either side of the river. It was destroyed in the 14th century by a flood, but was quickly rebuilt and has remained standing since. There were shops all along the bridge; originally they were quite varied, but eventually there were only goldsmiths and silversmiths.

The houses of the wealthy were grand affairs. They were several stories high, usually with fortified outer walls and doors, and a central courtyard inside. The head of the household usually lived on the second floor, with the first floor being used for storage and/or a place of business. Other members of the family lived on successively higher floors, with the kitchen being on the third or fourth, to keep smoke and odors from permeating the rest of the house. On the top floor was a *loggia*, or covered balcony, that allowed the family to get some fresh air and enjoy a view of the city and surrounding countryside. The **Palazzo Davanzati** is a fourteenth century Florentine house which has been restored to look as it would have during the Renaissance,

including furniture. Houses of artisans were much more humble, with only one or two rooms, possibly behind or over a shop or *bottega* (workshop).

9. Marriage

Marriage was perhaps the most important social institution in Florence in the fifteenth century. For the wealthy, at least, it was more of a contract between families than a union of love between two people. It was extremely rare (except in the case of those who had dedicated their lives to God) for a mature adult to remain unmarried. Women were usually married around the age of eighteen or nineteen, though sometimes it could be earlier, particularly if they were of a very high social status. Men were usually married in their mid- to late-twenties, though often they were older than that. It was more important for men to establish their career and be able to support a household before marrying.

Choosing the right mate was an arduous process, and usually the entire family got involved. There were many aspects to be considered, from the social status of both bride's and groom's families, to the amount of money that would change hands. Women needed a dowry in order to marry well, and in a family full of daughters this could become a major concern. A dowry could be cash, property and goods or a combination of both. The groom also gave gifts to the bride and her family, which could be quite lavish and expensive. The dowry was returned to the wife should her husband die and leave her a widow. Parents could invest in their daughters' futures by purchasing shares of the state-run dowry fund, the *Monte delle Doti*, which was established in 1425.

Parents and other family members, and even family friends, got in on the act when choosing a mate for their children. Potential matches were sized up, discussed and judged. The parents (or often just the father) would approach the parents of the other family to make a proposal. Sometimes an intermediary was employed for this purpose. Once the blessings of both families had been secured, the official process of marriage could begin.

The first stage was the signing of the contract, which was done in the presence of a notary. Only the men of the families would be present on this occasion. This formality made the contract legal. The next stage was a gathering at the bride's house, attended by the groom and some of his family or friends. This was when the bride and groom themselves officially consented to the match, and the groom presented the bride with a ring. He then gave the bride-gifts to the family, and there was a feast and celebration. The third stage of the wedding occurred when the bride processed through the streets with her family, dressed in her finest clothing (which might have been commissioned by the groom), bringing with her all her possessions and moving

them into her new home with her husband. This completed the transition from her old life at her father's home to her new life with her husband.

A marriage may or may not have been blessed by a priest. Marriage was (and is) a sacrament in the church, but a marriage was still considered binding as long as the bride and groom had agreed to marry one another. It was certainly considered beneficial to have a priest present but essentially marriage was a legal rather than religious arrangement.

10. Family

A newly-married couple's next duty was to start producing a family. The birth of a new child was both a time for rejoicing and a source of anxiety. Infant mortality rates were no better in Florence than in any other part of Europe at the time. It is hard to say exactly what percentage of children died before their second birthday, but suffice it to say that the number was high. The mother's life was also often in danger from complications from the birth.

While any child was welcomed and rejoiced over, boys were especially exclaimed over. They were expected to carry on the family name and usually to take over the family business when they came of age. Children usually stayed at home with their mothers until the age of about seven. Boys then went to school or were apprenticed in an artisan's workshop. Girls stayed home to learn how to run a household, to sew and embroider, or spin and weave if they were members of the lower class.

Several generations of family might live under the same roof together. When a couple married, they often lived with the groom's family. Thus, grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts and cousins might all share the same house, particularly in the large *palazzi* of the upper class. Sometimes a new couple might move into a place of their own, but it was likely in the same area of the city as their immediate family, even on the same street.

Generally speaking, there was no divorce - unhappily married couples might petition for an official separation, but they were not able to marry again. Usually marriages ended in the death of one partner. Annulment was rare. Men whose wives died were likely to marry again, since they would get another dowry with their new wife. They also needed someone to look after their house and any children from the first marriage. Women who were widowed could reclaim their dowry and use it to land another marriage, but a new husband was not obligated to support children from her first marriage. Young women with no children had a much easier time marrying again. Often, older women with waning fertility either moved in with other family members, such as a brother, or entered a convent. **Alessandra Strozzi**, as a widow in the

fifteenth century, chose not to remarry but to devote her life to helping her children make good marriages.

Slaves and servants, while not members of the family, were an important part of the household. Many slaves were young girls, often of Tartar origins, but also Greeks, Moors and Ethiopians. They worked in the houses of the wealthy, and even a well-off merchant or artisan might be able to afford one. Generally they were treated well, as a member of the family, but it was lawful for a man to beat his slave, just as it was lawful for him to beat his wife and children.

11. Material Culture

People during the fifteenth century generally had fewer possessions than we do today, and their homes were more sparsely furnished. However, wealthy men often made a point of collecting luxury items such as lavishly illuminated manuscripts, paintings by master artists, and examples of the goldsmith's art. Lorenzo de' Medici's collection of ancient manuscripts became the basis for the **Laurentian Library**, housed in the church of San Lorenzo.

Clothing was an extremely important aspect of material culture in Quattrocento Florence. It was a reflection of social rank and familial honor, as well as an opportunity to display one's wealth. Men's clothing tended to be restrained and conservative, unlike the more flamboyant fashions of neighboring Siena. Women's clothing indicated not only social status but age and stage of life as well. Young patrician women at the time of their marriage were bedecked in extravagant clothing, made of expensive velvets and brocades, embroidered with precious metal threads and embellished with gems and pearls. These garments were worn for only a few years, to be exchanged later for more modest clothing, appropriate for an older, married woman who ran her own household.

Both men and women wore a plain, linen undergarment called a *camicia*. It was generally about mid-thigh length for men; mid-calf or ankle length for women. Over that, men wore a *farsetto*, or doublet-type garment. Women wore a dress with a fitted bodice and pleated skirt called a *gamurra*. Both sexes wore hosen called *calze*; men's went up to the hip and tied to the farsetto, while women's most likely stopped at the knee and were held up with garters. When out in public, people wore another layer over those already described. The *cioppa* was very like a Northern European houppelande early in the century, but evolved over time. Men's *cioppe* were like voluminous coats, made out of good wool. Women's *cioppe* evolved to become more fitted and were worn over the *gamurra*. Another over garment was the *giornea*, which was a tabard-like garment originally used for military wear. Men's *giornee* were fairly short, and often gathered in heavy pleats. Women's *giornee* were floor length,

open on both sides and in the front. Women also wore a large cloak called a *mantello* when out in public, for modesty's sake. Hats and headgear were also ubiquitous; women often dressed their hair in elaborate styles, wearing jewelry and strings of pearls around their heads.

Household items made up the other part of most people's possessions. The *lettiera* (bed) was a major piece of furniture, and could be a simple mattress placed on a platform to an enormous carved, painted and gilded affair, or anything in between. Sometimes chests were built into the space under the bed, for storage. Many beds had curtains or canopies suspended around them from either posts or the ceiling, to keep out cold night air. Wealthier people might also own a *lettuccio*, or day-bed. Chairs or other seating furniture were also common; lower class people might only own a few simple stools, while the upper classes had nicer and more comfortable seating. The X-chair that one sees so often in the SCA was also common in Florence, as were benches. Even modern-looking rush bottomed chairs were known in the fifteenth century. Tables (*tavole*) were generally of the trestle type, though there are depictions of round tables as well. A wealthy patrician might also own a *credenza*, on which dishes and tableware could be stored and/or displayed. Chests were also important pieces of furniture, used for storing smaller household items and textiles. A *cassone* is a type of casket, often referred to as a marriage chest, though it was not necessarily part of the bride's trousseau. *Cassoni* were generally fairly large, and could be carved and painted lavishly, becoming works of art in their own right. There are several other names for chests, and it is not entirely clear what the difference between them is. Other furnishings included desks, mirrors, wash stands and close-stools.

Other household goods rounded out the bulk of people's personal belongings. Ceramic and metal table wares could be very valuable. *Maiolica*, or tin-glazed earthenware, was originally made in Spain, but many wealthy Florentines collected it to use in their homes. They might commission pieces with their heraldic motifs on it, or other decorative pieces, such as a 1477 shield with a coat of arms on it. Plates and dishes could also be made of bronze, gilt, or silver plated. Textiles were also an important part of the home: table linens, rugs, bedclothes and wall hangings were typical entries in contemporary inventories.

12. Entertainment

Not all of Florentine life was work and politics. They played games, held feasts and dancing and participated in grand tournaments. Games included card games like primero or dice games. Outdoor games involved various types of football, a precursor to bocce, and a game called *civettino* which involved trying to knock the hat off an opponent's head. Dancing was another major pastime in the fifteenth century. There

are a number of known Italian dances from this time, but whether any of them are specifically Florentine, I am not sure. It is known that Lorenzo de' Medici loved to dance, and probably composed dances and music of his own.

Tournaments were also great sources of entertainment, particularly for the wealthy, but many Florentines came to watch, along with guests from all over Italy. The Medici brothers, **Lorenzo and Giuliano**, organized at least two such spectacles; one in 1469 on the occasion of Lorenzo's marriage to **Clarice Orsini**, and the other in 1475, sponsored by Giuliano. Giuliano's tournament was held in the **Piazza de Santa Croce**. Both events were immortalized in epoch poetry by **Luigi Pulci and Agnolo Poliziano**. All the participants marched in a grand procession, resplendent in bright clothing and finely crafted armor. The leading artists of the day also participated by designing armor, banners and other accoutrements (**Andrea del Verrocchio** and Sandro Botticelli were among them). A Queen of the Joust and Queen of Beauty were chosen among the ladies of Florence.

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